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REMARKS OF HON. RUDOLPH BLANKENBURG

Let me extend to you, who have come from a distance, on behalf of the city of Philadelphia, our appreciation and sincere thanks for your presence at this important conference. We feel that the conference has been a great success and will lead to gratifying results not only in bringing about a better understanding between municipalities and public service corporations, but also because we, individually, have been brought into closer touch with one another.

I now take great pleasure in introducing to you the presiding officer of this meeting, who for seventeen years was a member of the Interstate Commerce Commission, and is now the director of valuation of that commission—Judge Prouty of Washington.

HON. CHARLES A. PROUTY, Director of Bureau of Valuations, Interstate Commerce Commission, Washington, D. C.:

You gentlemen represent the dwellers in cities, but you have called to preside over your deliberations for this hour a country man. Not only are my inclinations toward the fields but I am a practical tiller of the soil. A hoe handle is dearer to me than a golf stick, and no perfume is so sweet as that of the growing grass and the fresh-turned earth of springtime.

Nevertheless, I must admit that the activities of today are largely confined to the town. Our cities are the suns of the intellectual, the commercial, of even the moral sphere whose rays penetrate and enliven the country. We have our problems in the country, one of which is to feed you gentlemen of the cities, to do which, according to my mathematics, we must double the yield per acre of our farms in the next half century. We have other problems of importance, but I must still admit that it is in the city where the evils congregate, where poverty is the most biting, where competition of all kinds is the fiercest, where land and everything which goes with it, sunshine and pure air and a comfortable dwelling place, are forced to extravagant prices by the congestion of population, that the problems are the most difficult and the most pressing.

One of the gravest of these problems is that presented by the public utility. It has come to be admitted, although not until after much experimentation and much discussion, that certain things—water, gas, electricity, transportation from point to point within the municipality—are of such controlling importance that it is the duty of a municipality to see to it that they are furnished in a proper way, of a proper kind, and for a proper price. That is the utility problem.

Nothing has contributed so much in the past to the difficulty of a proper solution of that problem as the want of some consistent and comprehensive plan. If you will look over the history of any city in the United States of considerable size and trace the record of its utility efforts, you will find that large sums of money have been squandered because there was no comprehensive idea of what should be done or how it could best be done in that direction.

It is not my duty to participate in the discussion; I am here simply to preside; so to speak, to direct.

Before we enter upon that subject, however, we are to hear from two gentlemen who should have spoken this forenoon but who are of the left-over class. The first of these is Mr. M. N. Baker, editor of the *Engineering News*, of New York City, and the second is Hon. Robert Crosser, United States Congressman from Ohio.